

MINISTER DEBRE—He'll get U.S. message.

New Publishing Service

'Book Consultant' Opens City Office

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"Everywhere I go, people ask me 'What is a book consultant?'"

It's not surprising, for Hubert Bermont recently opened his office here as the Nation's first book consultant.

"I thought I was the only one in Washington. Then I went to the American Booksellers Association convention and found that I was the only one in the entire country."

Bermont offers clients a full range of services, from reading manuscripts to planning marketing campaigns. He gained much of his knowledge of books while working for Brentano's, for which he was executive director of this district for the past ten years. But he works on an hourly basis, in contrast to literary agents who usually get a percentage of an author's earnings.

Although he only opened this office on July 1, Bermont has been working on it since he left Brentano's in January. His clients, include the publishing houses of Harper and Row, Grosset and Dunlap, and Acropolis, several associations including the National Education Association and the Booksellers group, several bookstores and 12 individuals.

Bermont brings to his work knowledge of the book business in general as well

as specific knowledge of the Washington and New York markets. Thus, he can act as a liaison between local authors, and publishers, who are mainly based in New York.

"Washington is a very special place," Bermont said. "A New York company will send a representative down here and he won't know who to invite to a cocktail party introducing the book."

Bermont undertakes to help an author crack what he calls "a very tough market—a horse race with 32,000 entries each year." His services include advice as to specific houses interested in a particular field, editing, and marketing.

Another facet of Bermont's work will be advising associations that want to establish book clubs for their members or to sell their publications to the general public.

One of Bermont's pet hopes for the future, he said, is to see the establishment of a major trade publishing house in Washington. He attributed his in-

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BOOKS—From F1

Consultant Aids Authors, Publishers

terest in the project to his "Washington chauvinism" and a conviction that "a well-managed, well-financed house could make it here."

Robert Luce, an owner and editor-in-chief of one Washington publishing firm, said he thought a big publishing house could succeed here, but stressed that it would take a long time, "maybe ten years," and a lot of money before it could become solidly established. His Company, Robert B. Luce, Inc., publishes about 15 titles a year, compared with the hundreds the big New York houses turn out annually.

Clarke Newlon, the director of the Washington office of Praeger Publishers, Inc. of New York discounted the disadvantages that New York's distance creates for Washington authors. He said that "publishers are interested in seeing the manuscript more than seeing the author and noted the difficulty an unknown author would have in getting to see an important publisher if he just "dropped in" in the New York office.

Praeger, which publishes over 300 books a year, has permanent Washington office. Agents for other New York houses also circulate freely here, looking for promising authors—especially on Capitol Hill—and potential best-sellers.